

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJ: VIEWS OF LEOPOLDO PIRELLI, PRESIDENT, PIRELLI ITALIANA 5/17/78

1. IN MEETING WITH DPO, PIRELLI SAID HE WAS SURPRISED AT THE ELECTION RESULTS. HE HAD KNOWN THE DC WOULD ADVANCE. BUT HE HAD THOUGHT THE PCI WOULD STAND STILL OR LOSE NO MORE THAN ONE PERCENTAGE POINT. AND HE WAS COMPLETELY TAKEN ABACK BY THE SOCIALIST SUCCESS, JUST AS THE SOCIALISTS THEMSELVES WERE. THEIR VICTORY WAS NO DOUBT DUE IN SOME PART TO CRAXI'S MORO INITIATIVE. THE PSI HAD DOUBLED ITS VOTE IN MORO'S NATIVE PUBLIA, AND HAD DONE WELL ALL OVER.

2. WHAT WAS IMPORTANT NOW, HE SAID, WAS THAT THE DC'S NOT TRY TO USE THEIR VICTORY TO OVERTHROW THE EXISTING POLITICAL EQUILIBRIUM. THERE WAS A DANGER THAT THE HARDLINERS IN THE DC MIGHT TRY THAT. IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE THAT ITALY COULD ILL AFFORD AT THIS DELICATE MOMENT.

3. ONE AREA WHERE THE DC MIGHT NOW PUSH - AND PIRELLI IMPLIED HE FOUND THIS LEGITIMATE - WAS THE PRESIDENCY. BEFORE THE ELECTIONS IT HAD BEEN CERTAIN THAT THE NEXT PRESIDENT WOULD BE A DC APPROVED BY THE COMMUNISTS. NOW THE DC MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO TRY TO NAME ITS OWN MAN - MAYBE EVEN A NON-CHRISTIAN DEMO-
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CRAT - WITHOUT COMMUNIST SUPPORT.

4. PIRELLI ALSO RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF A RETURN TO A CENTER LEFT GOVERNMENT. WHETHER THERE WAS YET ENOUGH SUPPORT FOR THAT WITHIN THE PSI, THOUGH, HE PROFESSED NOT TO KNOW.

5. AND WHAT ABOUT THESE COMMUNISTS? COULD THEY BE TRUSTED?

FIRST, SAID PIRELLI, HE WISHED OF COURSE THAT THE PCI WERE A MUCH WEAKER OR NON-EXISTENT PARTY. BUT THAT WASN'T THE CASE. THEY WERE THERE AND HAD TO BE DEALT WITH IN SUCH A WAY THAT ITALY DIDN'T COME APART AT THE SEAMS. FOR HIS PART, HE BELIEVED IN THE GOOD FAITH OF BERLINGUER AND HIS COLLEAGUES. NOT THAT HE WOULD RISK THE NECK OF HIS SON ON THAT PROPOSITIO DN BUT WITHIN NORMAL LIMITS HE THOUGHT THE COMMUNISTS CREDIBLE. THEY RECOGNIZED THE EXCESSES TO WHICH SOME OF THEIR PAST POLICIES HAD LED AND EVEN TOOK A LARGE PART OF THE BLAME - AT LEAST IN PRIVATE.

6. FURTHERMORE, SAID PIRELLI, HE THOUGHT THE CATHOLIC-COMMUNIST ALLIANCE COULD BE A MODEL ELSEWHERE THAN IN ITALY - EASTERN EUROPE, TO BE SPECIFIC. THERE YOU HAD COMMUNIST PARTIES AT LEASHLSOME PARTS OF WHICH WANTED - OR MIGHT WANT IN THE FUTURE - TO DISTANCE THEMSELVES FROM THE SOVIETS. THEY WOULD NEED INTERNAL SUPPORT TO DO THIS, AND THAT SUPPORT COULD COME FROM THE CHURCH. IN POLAND, FOR EXAMPLE, WHERE A LARGE MAJORITY WAS STILL CATHOLIC, THE CHURCH WOULD BE A POWERFUL ALLY FOR A CP INTERESTED IN ASSERTING A DEGREE OF INDEPENDENCE FROM THE RUSSIANS.

7. THE RED BRIGADES? THEY WERE THE PRODUCT OF ONE OF THE PCI'S EXCESSES - THE LONG AND PERSISTENT DENIGRATION OF THE FORCES OF ORDER THAT HAD CREATED A DISCONTENTED FRINGE WELL TO THE LEFT OF WHERE THE COMMUNISTS HAD SINCE MOVED. THE
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WEAKNESS OF THE MACHINERY OF STATE ALSO PLAYED A PART. AGAINST A POLICE FORCE LIKE THE FRENCH, THE BR WOULD NOT HAVE GOTTEN TO THIS POINT.

8. ONE THING THAT WORRIED PIRELLI WAS THE ATTITUDE OF ITALY'S HIGHLY POLITICIZED YOUNG PEOPLE - FROM 15 UP. EVEN THE CHILDREN OF FRIENDS OF HIS WERE OFTEN NOT MUCH CONCERNED WITH THE MORO TRAGEDY AND REPROVED THEIR PARENTS FOR DEVOTING TOO MUCH OF THEIR ATTENTION TO IT. THEY HAD QUICKLY BECOME TIRED OF HEARING ABOUT MORO'S TRAVAIL.

9. WHAT SHOULD THE US BE DOING? FIRST, PIRELLI THOUGHT WE SHOULD AVOID OVERT CRITICAL COMMENT ON ITALY'S PRESENT FRAGILE POLITICAL SOLUTION. IT WAS NOT A GOOD ONE BUT WHAT WOULD YOU SUBSTITUTE FOR IT? THE PEOPLE WHO TALKED ABOUT ITALY'S CONTINUING SLIDE AWAY FROM TMC WESTERN ORBIT, ABOUT HOW ITALY WAS ALREADY DISQUALIFYING HERSELF AS A CREDIBLE NATO PARTNER AND SO ON, WERE CREATING TENSIONS, WEAKENING THE COUNTRY, AND SCARING OFF MUCH NEEDED FOREIGN INVESTMENT. THE US SHOULD INSTEAD BE TREATING ITALY AS A FRIEND IN TROUBLE - NOT AS AN ERRANT SON. THAT WOULD MAKE ITALIANS FEEL THEY WERE STILL WELCOME IN THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE, WHERE HE WAS SURE

ITALY WANTED TO REMAIN. FINA

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